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Sex and Religion

IT is my hope that this booklet may be of use to all parents and teachers whatever their religion or lack of it may be, whatever their country or social tradition.

There are those who maintain that instruction in sex matters should be entirely divorced from religion. Religions, however, date from ancient days. Nearly every religion concerns itself with sex, and religious views cannot summarily be disentangled from the social consciousness on sex matters, even if it were ultimately possible to do so. But is it possible or right entirely to dissociate religion and sex? I think not. My reason for this view I give on p. 8.

Religion, as most of us know it, is presented to us with outward trappings, which though non-essential appear essential to the uncritical mind. These outward trappings vary widely even among different sects of the same religion.

The customs and peculiarities of some of the sects, even those which maintain themselves in a modern civilised country like England, appear to many to be revoltingly barbaric or disingenuously

illogical. It is such irrelevant and local manifestations on the part of the human representatives and institutions of various sects which encourage the hasty to conclude that all religion is best kept away from sex matters, because sex of all subjects at present requires consideration in the clear light of unbiased truth. The practices of some exponents of religion make it clear that truth and logical thought are remote from them. When one knows for instance that a priesthood sterilises some of its young boys, castrating them to preserve their soprano voices, but at the same time condemns the "wickedness" of scientifically controlling the conception of diseased and unwholesome children, one is tempted to doubt whether priests have any right to claim serious attention in sex ethics. When one also learns that a sect considers it worse than murder to permit a young girl to menstruate before she marries, and thus incites to child marriages, one feels as though the only hope for a rational sex life would be for such religions to be swept off the face of the earth. One cannot but feel there is some excuse for those agnostics who

denounce religions as the root of our sex problems, difficulties and diseases.

I feel, however, that the profundities of religion are not essentially involved in these and other deplorable individual manifestations. Not only does the human race need religion, but it needs a religious realisation immensely more profound and more interwoven into the consciousness and daily life of the people than any save the exceptional mind has hitherto possessed. I would not cut religion away from the consideration of sex, but I would, on the contrary, reform the existing religions and build them more deeply into the essential life of mankind.

As the tenets of the numerous sects upon the earth vary so widely, what can one possibly say on the theme of religion and sex which will be equally true of them all, and may be equally helpful to the believers of all creeds? Their diversity is so great, the hasty may say, that there is nothing that can possibly be said which will be true and helpful to the believers in all religions. But I say not only is there one thing to be said, but that it is a most profoundly helpful and racially important

thing, and it can be accepted by *all* the exponents of *all* religions. It is as follows:

God Himself creates human beings by the use of the sex organs of human beings at present existing in this world. In this way humanity collaborates in the divine work of creation.

Hence all knowledge and all facts about the sex organs and their most intimate structure, and the physiological laws which govern their material expression, are not only of supreme interest and importance to the human race but should be a highly honoured branch of social wisdom.

The consciousness that God requires human collaboration through the very same material means which the vulgar have debased in idea, must, if fully realised, safeguard youth, protect purity and strengthen the race. It must elevate and intensify the feeling of spiritual unity with the Divine which it is the object of almost all religions to inculcate among a humanity prone to backslide. The separation of religion from daily life, the frequency of sex crimes even on the part

of those trying 'to lead a religious life,' all arise from a lack of realisation of the soul's marvellous potency and the Divine power within the racial organs.

In acceptance of the above profound truth all religions worshipping God under any of His numerous names could unite. That agreement and that realisation will be a great step forward for humanity.

Alas! the different sects, with their various and differing traditions, and changing and diverse customs, will interpret this great truth differently. One of the obstacles in the way of its realisation will be the traditions already maintained and established within the sects. Most of these date back for many centuries and many are based on false ideas and ideals initiated during times of primitive physiological ignorance. These encourage the 'religious' person to look upon sex life as 'self-indulgence,' to glorify the ascetic rather than the married who carry on the race, and in many respects to place on a low level, if not actually to degrade, the manifestations of a normal sex life.

Each adherent of each sect will find for himself the warping of the Truth his own

sect suffers from, and must fight out this battle individually for himself or herself. The truths enunciated on page 8 are warped, hindered, or even positively denied, in many quarters. I do not wish here to enter on a consideration of the various and widely diverse teachings of different sects on sex matters. In recent years there has been much change and modification, even on the part of such sects as the Roman Catholics. Parents and teachers who attempt to discuss in detail the sex teachings of the various religions with a young, enquiring and penetrating mind will find themselves confronted by some very difficult tasks.

Turning from the absolutely universal to the particular aspects of one of the great world religions, Christianity, we are faced at once by an immense difficulty in dealing with the young. Parts of both the Bible and the Prayer Book are unfit for a child's perusal. When the Holy Books of a State religion are unfit reading for that nation's young, what can one say about the officials, priesthoods and religious leaders who blunder along burking recognition of this fact? Some parts of

the Bible are not read aloud in congregation, but the printed Book complete is to be found in very nearly every school and home. While it is true that 'to the pure all things are pure,' the kind of answers a child in its purity will receive, when it asks the meaning of some of the Bible texts, will be (if it has not already had the misfortune to receive it) its first lesson in lying and prevarication by its elders.

To one who takes religion seriously the present state of affairs appears appalling. Why do the leaders of the Churches not do their obvious duty, and boldly recognise the difficulties surrounding parents and young people of the present day, and put an end to the shams and pretences that are rampant? We have expurgated Shakespeare and somewhat modernised his diction, and to read the sixteenth-century Shakespeare one has to be a student with a student's ticket for the British Museum. The Bible, which was translated about the same epoch, could also be expurgated without being tampered with otherwise. Until this is done and the current editions of the Bible

cleaned up, parents and teachers who are in the frank confidence of young people are liable to have extremely awkward discussions raised by some of the texts.

The parents themselves should be responsible for the religious instruction of their children. Yet even were this universally so, and no religious instruction given in any school, the class teacher could not eliminate all consideration of the various ideas and traditions of differing sects current among the pupils.

Without taking into account the minor influences of many different religions and moralities which impinge on our more or less accepted code, it is necessary, if intelligible discussion is to be conducted with an unbiased and enquiring young mind, to realise the different, and sometimes conflicting, threads woven into the strands of our current ideas.

Much of the confused thinking and the conflict current when sex matters are considered, are due to the fact that we do not possess one settled and accepted code or belief as to what our race and nation should aim at, nor even what we consider moral. In the Bible itself very

different and conflicting precepts are co-existent and may be even read out in our national church on the same day. Each receives some acceptance, and parts of each code may be more or less fervently advocated by estimable people.

First, in our Christian religion, lingers the ancient Jewish morality, which bids us 'increase and multiply and replenish the earth.' *Fecundity* is its aim, and where it has undisputed sway, polygamy and even the 'raising of seed' by a deceased husband's brother were virtuous. The morality of fecundity is still often ardently preached by those who adopt parts of this old code to suit their arguments.

Secondly, we have in our current codes the influences of the Pauline and Augustine morality (which was possibly a reaction from some of the more obviously crude results of the previous one) which advocates the *elimination* of *sex influence* so far as possible. In line with this we have the celibacy of the clergy, of monks, and nuns and the *exaltation of virginity* above motherhood.

Priests still obey the echo of the early Christian Fathers, who, believing the end

of the world was approaching and desirable, urged the cessation of all child-bearing and condemned all sex life. Thus in present-day Christianity there still is the conflict of diametrically opposite teachings about our most important function, and quite young people detect the conflict and are disturbed by it.

Thirdly, permeating our code are influences from the religions of the ancient pagan world through Rome, in which the *family* and its inheritance of property led to relations between the husband and wife often in conflict with that which is best for each of them as individuals.

Fourthly, there is the more modern tenet, referred to by Mr. Aylmer Maude in his *Life of Tolstoy*, where it is said that in the morality of sex 'what makes for the health, happiness, and efficiency of the present and future generations is good, and what makes in the contrary direction is evil.'

The absence of any clear-cut, nationally accepted basis of sex morality causes not only confusion of thought but lies at the root of much wrong-doing.

It is very important that those in charge

of the young should realise this, and by recognising the separate and sometimes conflicting strands in our complex current codes, should warn the young against being carried off their feet when any one of the component parts are pressed on them by ardent but narrow-minded people.

At no period of human life on this earth, even actually before birth, does sex lack significance.

Its manifest workings upon our daily lives, however, are wielded through the invisible supremacy of nerve and gland over our tissues. Though we experience the results of the balanced sex control of our bodies, humanity has not until recently even been aware of the existence of these interactions. Hence no vocabulary for these sex ideas exists other than the scientific language of those who have made the discoveries. And hence the usual national sex-inhibitions do not apply to this aspect of sex life. Strange and illogical as it seems to one to whom all natural aspects of sex are pure, this particular phase alone has been accepted as a quite legitimate subject for public discussion. In my opinion this desirable openness

about some of the inherent mysteries of sex, which is so strikingly in contrast to the reticence and vulgarity of our treatment of other scientific truths about sex, is very largely due to the fact that *from the first the ideas had a suitable vocabulary.* Hence newspapers do not hesitate to publish reports about the action of hormones, the secretions of the ductless glands, of the pineal or pituitary, nor to accept advertisements about cognate matters of the most intricate and intimate nature in our sex lives quite calmly, reasonably and, in my opinion, properly, although this frankness is in marked contrast to their attitude toward other and equally important aspects of sex physiology. When we turn to consider other facts of sex life, and especially those experienced for centuries, we find a shame-faced dirtiness of mind upon the subject, and that the Press hinders serious efforts to enlighten the public. Here I see that *the absence of an acceptable vocabulary is revealed as having a great influence on the trend of thought.* For some of the basic facts of sex life, known since the mists of antiquity, were in those days

considered too sacred or too shameful to be spoken of. Hence each generation of fresh young people spontaneously frank with their simple enquiries about these facts (as about all others in this world) are hushed by their elders.

If those who look on sex as sacred will not reveal its mysteries, and in all the centuries which have passed have failed to create a sacred vocabulary in which to initiate youth, we can scarcely be surprised that youth turns to other sources for information. Those to whom sex is a lewd enjoyment naturally snigger with congenial companions, and the result is that young people hear the wanton tattle or its echoes. The children of each generation receive in turn a strong bias, inclining them to think of the well-known facts of sex as shameful and *not* as sacred.

Nothing will rectify this profound racial error, nothing will put an end to this shocking irreverence, but a vocabulary.

We must have words to use which enable those who consider sex a sacred, or at any rate serious, beautiful and dignified thing, to express their meaning. The old question, 'What's in a name? A

rose by any other name would smell as sweet,' is in this respect to be answered most emphatically—'*Everything* is in a name.'

The word sex and most of its derivatives have become contaminated in the minds of a large proportion of people. The result of this is that whenever one who has something to say uses the word (as of necessity it must be used in dealing with the subject) deep inhibitions, reactions, obsessions and antagonisms are roused in some or many of those who hear the word, and the result is a condition of mental conflict in which the new and sweet ideas suffer as do small boats tossed in a tempest.

I am convinced that the majority of decent people to-day are not inherently opposed to the *ideas* which those who would reform sex matters in our midst are desirous of placing before the public. Yet as the ancient word 'sex' has not the conveyance of a single or simple concept but is an omnibus packed with ill-assorted, conflicting ideas, some of them foul and obscene, the whole 'bus load seems to be indited by their presence.

Let us think what the word sex denotes to the average mind—a swift, hazy, kaleidoscopic series of half-blurred pictures of the worse than bestiality in dens and haunts of degraded mankind; of the barbarities of the male savage towards his female; of the refined horror of modern prostitution; of the purely physical relation of the mating animals. Try as he will the modern man cannot free his own mental concept of sex from some fringe, some hazy aura of all these things because the word sex is applied to them all and they, therefore, fantastically appear to be aspects of the same thing which he and his noble and beautiful beloved are living together. The life that he and his beloved are living together is, however, not comparable nor is it soiled by the attributes of these other phenomena. It is, in my opinion, a freshly evolved, nobler, subtler, immensely richer and more beautiful thing than the primitive or the aberrant forms which it has passed and outwinged on its way upwards.

For the modern relation between man and woman mated or living in the innumerable interdependencies, the mutual obeisances, the mutual respects which are

not paralleled at all in the sex relation of the primitive peoples or in the debased lives of the violently depraved, a clean, fresh, subtle word is wanted, and instead of the soiled and degraded word 'sexual' life, for this new and elevated interplay between man and woman I propose the word 'erogamic' life.

Erogamic *is a new word coined here and to-day for the purpose of crystallising a vital idea that is in our midst though barely recognised.* It is derived from the Greek: *eros*—love, and *gamos*—marriage or mating. I mint it with the intention that it shall designate that noble flower of the duality of human life, the mating and relation together of man and woman in all three planes—physical, mental and spiritual.

Erogamic life, and not sexual life, is that which we who would reform the relation between man and woman—hold up as a standard. I desire to set this idea free in all its potential power and beauty to do good in the world. The physiological aspects of normal sex we all have as a physical basis in our lives; for the evolved interplay of man and woman we can speak of erogamic life and leave the

word 'sexual' to those who still roll in the filth and who delight in the unclean echoes of the centuries.

For dictionary purposes the new word erogamic may be defined as: All that relation, in cultivated communities, between man and woman as mated pair which involves their mutual interplay and interdependencies in physical, mental and spiritual life.

I trust that the fresh word for the fresh and beautiful concept (essentially characteristic of this century) of nobly and completely mated man and woman may replace the soiled and bedraggled collection of ideas and themes at present lumped together under the words 'sex' and 'sexual.' Indeed I feel acutely that the world has rightly sickened of 'talk of things sexual.' The word is itself sickening, but that nobler thing which has grown in our midst is a great and beautiful fact which we can sense better when it is defined and described in a word giving a clear, fresh picture.

All human beings with but few tragic exceptions (and these are pathetic, abnor-

mal and misformed individuals) are clearly and completely of one type or the other of the human duity. I revive the use of '*duity*,' which is an ancient word but little known, for the human duality—God in His unity, mankind in our duity—is the contrast contained in the word, and I use it because I think here too is the suggestion of a fresh atmosphere for man and woman dwelling in complete harmony with the interplay of all their own individual qualities, creating the perfect human duity. All the cruelties, abominations, contaminations, terrors and indecencies which have resulted from the misuse of the purely physical aspects of sex will be ultimately swept away by the higher form of dual life. For not only in our material bodies but in an overwhelming degree throughout our social life and all our institutions does the richness and the vitality of life depend on the bifurcation of the human species and its mutual elevation and evolution. There is no escaping the reality of the erogamic life unless one envelops one's intellect in a cloudy fog of mental confusion. Those who live in such confusion may maintain

that this duity is non-essential. But why should those who see the light follow those who have merely dulled the intelligence? Given a realization of all the beauty and the potential power that the dual harmony in the erogamic life can contain, none would desire to escape into mono-sexual asceticism, but with a bold and joyous front would face the facts, recognising the marvellous richness that the play and interplay of man and woman has made with all their ultimate ramifications of beauty and art, social conventions and decoration. Those who claim that the higher intellectual and spiritual achievements of the erogamic life can be surpassed in any other way are merely deluding themselves.

The new and still nascent higher sex morality which I am trying to crystallise (as in *Married Love*, the *New Gospel*, and parts of my other books) encourages complete health and happiness in individuals welded into life-long devotion on the part of the married pair and **presents the idea of the erogamic life of the human duity as the highest mundane expression of life.** The new code

imposes the duty that this human duity shall reproduce its kind consciously and deliberately in the interests of the Race and as the flower of the noblest erogamic life of the adults. This new morality restores *Christ's* gospel of Love and shields it with knowledge, exalts motherhood above virginity but only when it is responsible motherhood, and eliminating the evils of polygamy and prostitution yet restores due respect to the vitalising gift of sex experience.

I desire to close with the main thought contained in it, that *our sex life is our most direct link with the Divine life*, and therefore a reverent enquiry into and a deep knowledge of all the relevant facts about sex are not only legitimate but essential to one who desires to help youth to lead a noble life.

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